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A MERRIE DIALOGUE

Betweene

Band, Cuffe, and Ruffe,

Done by an excellent Wit, and lately acted in a Shew in the Famous Universitie of Cambridge.

London, printed by W. Stansby for Miles Partrich, and are to be sold at his shop neere Saint Dunstone's Church-yard, in Fleet Street.
1615.

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To the Readers of the Old Book Collector's Miscellany.

The punning species of wit with which this and the preceding Dramatic Dialogues abound, is likely to have procured them many academical admirers. The particular occasion which introduced them does not appear; but as they are curious specimens of the taste of a former age in its scholastic entertainments, and by no means devoid of humour, we have reprinted them.

Fencing was introduced into England from France, and soon became popular. Fencing-schools were opened in various parts of the town, and from what we can glean from our early dramatic writers, they were by no means *Moral Schools*, or *Schools for Morals;* but as every gentleman was supposed to *wear* a sword, and some feeling inclined also to *use* one, "schools" became a necessity, and we can, therefore, easily imagine that such a smartly written and right "Merrie Dialogue between Sword, Rapier, and Dagger," would be likely to *draw*.

The "Merrie Dialogue between Band, Cuff, and Ruff," is of considerable value as an illustration of the history of the costume of the period. The band, as an article of ornament for the neck, was the common wear of gentlemen, though now exclusively retained by the clergy and lawyers; the cuff, as a fold at the end of a sleeve, or the part of the sleeve turned back from the hand, was made highly fantastical by means of ornamental "cut work;" the ruff, as a female neck ornament, made of plaited lawn, or other material, is well-known, but it was formerly used by both sexes. The effeminacy and coxcombry of a man's ruff, is well ridiculed by many of our dramatic writers.

A MERRY DIALOGUE

BETWEEN

BAND, CUFF, AND RUFF.

Actors: BAND, CUFF, RUFF.

Enter Band and Cuff.

Band. uff, where art thou?

Cuff. Here at *hand.*

Enter Ruff.

Ruff. Where is this Cuff?

Cuff. Almost at your *elbow.*

Ruff. Oh, Band, art thou there? I thought thou hadst been *worn* out of date by this time, or *shrunk* in the *washing* at least.

Band. What, do you think I am afraid of your *greatness?* No, you shall know that there are men of *fashion* in place as well as yourself.

Cuff. Good Band, do not *fret* so.

Band. A scurvy shig-shag gentleman, new come out of the North ; a puisne, a very freshman, come up hither to learn fashions ; and seek to expel me?

Cuff. Nay, if you be so *broad* with him, Band ; we shall have a *fray* presently.

Ruff. Sir, I'll pull down your *collar* for you *(He jostles B. and C. stays him.)*

Cuff. It was time for me to *stay* you : for I am sure you were a *falling Band.*

Ruff. Well, Band, for all you are so *stiff*, I'll make you *limber* enough before I leave you.

Band. No, hog-yonker, its more than thou canst do.

Cuff. O let me come to him. Well, Band, let me catch you in another place, and I'll make *cut-work* of you.

Band. Cut-work of me! No, there's ne'er a Spanish Ruff of you all can do it.

Cuff. S'foot, if these two should go together by the *ears*, Cuff would be in a fine plight ; would he not ?

Ruff. Well, Band, thou hadst need look to thyself : for if I meet thee, I will *lace* thee *roundly.*

Band. Lace me ? Thou wouldst be *laced* thyself ; for this is the very truth, Ruff, thou art but a *plain* knave.

Cuff. If they talk of *lacing*, I were best look about myself.

Ruff. Darest thou meet me in the field?

Band. In the field? Why thou art but an effeminate fellow, Ruff, for all thou art so well *set*. But at what weapon?

Ruff. Nay, I will give thee that advantage. Bring thou what weapons thou wilt. I scorn to make anything of thee, Band, but *needle-work*.

Band. S'foot, thou shalt know, a gentleman and a soldier scorns thy proffer.

Ruff. A soldier.

Cuff. Did you not hear of the great *Bands* went over of late?

Ruff. Where didst thou serve? in the Low Countries?

Cuff. It may be so: for he is a *Holland Band*.

Band. Where served, it is no matter; but I am sure I have been often *pressed*.

Cuff. Truly, his *laundress* will witness thereof.

Ruff. Press me no pressings: for I'll make you know that Ruff is *steeled* to the back. If I had my *stick* here, you should feel it.

Band. Nay, bragger, it is not you great words can carry it away so. Give Band but a *hem*, and he will be for you at any time. Name, therefore, the place, the day, and the hour of our meeting.

Ruff. The place, the *papermills:* where I will tear thee into *rags*, before I have done with thee: the time, to-morrow about one. But do you hear? We will fight *single:* you shall not be *double*, Band.

Cuff. Now I perceive the Spaniard and the Hollander will to it roundly.

Ruff. But do you hear? Once more, do not say at our next meeting you forgot the time.

Cuff. No: I dare warrant you, there is no man more careful of the time than Band is: for I am sure he hath always a dozen *clocks*[1] about him.

Ruff. Farewell then.

Band. Then farewell.

Cuff. Nay, you shall not part so. You two will go into the fields to fight, and know not what fighting means. A couple of *white-livered* fellows! the laundress will make you both look as *white* as a *clout*, if she list. If you lack *beating*, she'll beat you I'll warrant you. She'll so *clap* your *sides* together, that she'll beat you all to pieces, in once or twice handling. Why, I have known her leave her *marks* behind her a whole week together. She'll quickly beat you *black* and *blue;* for I am sure she'll scarce *wash white* before she *starch.*

Band. Well, remember the time and place, Ruff.

[1] CLOCK.—A kind of ornamental work worn of various parts of dress, now applied exclusively to that on each side of a stocking.—Clock-work.

Cuff. Remember yourself, and Mistress *Stitchwell* ; one that you have been both beholden to in your days.

Band. Who? Mistress Stitchwell. I know her not.

Cuff. Nor thou neither.

Ruff. No :—I swear by all the *gum* and *blue starch* in Christendom.

Cuff. I thought so. Why its the *sempster.* One, that both you had been *undone*, had it not been for her. But what talk I of your *undoing?* I say Mistress Stitchwell, the sempstress, was the very *maker* of you : yet you regard her thus little. But it is the common *fashion* of you all. When you come to be so *great* as you are, you forget from what house you came.

Ruff. S'foot ! Ruff careth not a *pin* for her.

Band. Nor Band a *button.*

Cuff. Well, well Band and Ruff, you had best take heed of her, you know she set you both in the *stocks* once before ; and if she catch you again, it is a hundred to one, if she *hang* you not both up ; for she hath got strings already.

Ruff. Well, meet me if thou darst.

Band. The place, the paper-mills, the hour, tomorrow at one.

Cuff. If you go, go. But look well about you, do you hear me ? As little a fellow as I am, I will come

and *cuff* you both out of the field. If I do not, say Cuff is no man of his *hands*.

Ruff. Alas! poor shrimp, thou art nothing in my hands.

Cuff. If you go, you shall never say Cuff came of a *sleeveless* errand. I'll *bind* your *hands*, I warrant you, for striking.

Band. Say, and hold, Ruff, remember the paper-mills.

Cuff. And if ye be so choleric, I'll even pin you both in, as soon as I come home. Can you not decide the quarrel between yourselves, without a field? I thought, Ruff, you had been a little more mild, Ruff. You were a horrible puritan the other day, a very *precise* Ruff.

Ruff. Hang him, base rascal! Would he not make any man mad, to see such a poor snake? I durst not scarce peep out of doors, before *Collar* came to town, and now to swagger thus.

Cuff. Come, you shall be friends, Band.

Band. Friends with him? such a base rascal as he is! a *thread-bare* fellow as he is! I scorn, but my man Collar should go better every day in the week than he, and be friends with him.

Ruff. Thy man, Collar? Thy master, thou would'st have said. I am sure he is thy *upholder*.

Cuff. Nay, surely, he is his master; at least his maker. For Bands make rags, rags make paper,

paper makes pasteboard, and pasteboard makes *Collar:* and is not this a *stiff* argument, that he is his maker, and therefore master?

Ruff. Well, be he what he will, if I catch his collar I'll cut him in *jags.* Let me but clasp him, and I'll make him for stirring.

Cuff. But ye shall not fight. Have ye not friends and neighbours enough to end this controversy, but you must go into the fields, and there cut the *thread* of your lives? No, we'll have no such doing. Come, choose you an umpire, Band, for it shall be so.

Band. Since you will force me to it; if Ruff be content, I am willing.

Cuff. Ruff, you shall be content.

Ruff. If I shall, then I must: let me name him.

Band. If I may choose, I'll have Master Handkerchief.

Cuff. Nay, stay there: he is a mutable *snivelling* fellow, and a notable lawyer. He will *wipe* your nose of all, if you put the *case* to him. But what say you to *Shirt?*

Ruff. Hang him, a *rope* on him. He is a filthy *shifting* knave; and one to whom Band a little before hath been much beholden. They were *joined* a long time together in friendship.

Cuff. Why, then go to Master Cap the *headman* of the town.

Band. No ; I deem that he is a very bad justice. You may have him *wrought* on any *side* for money.

Ruff. I'll tell you what : then we will go to my Lord *Corpus* himself.

Band. He is not in town.

Ruff. He is : for to-day I saw *Sock*, his chief *foot*-man in town.

Cuff. Here's ado with you and my Lord *Corpus*. Indeed, I would you were both hanged about his *neck* for me ; for then I think you would be both *even*. But I see, this strife will never be ended, till I be arbitrator myself. You know I am equally allied to you both : shall I be moderator between you?

Band and *Ruff.* Content.

Cuff. Well then, Ruff shall be most accounted of amongst the clergy, for he is the graver fellow : although I know the puritans will not greatly care for him ; he hath such a deal of *sitting*, and they love *standing* better. As for you, Band, you shall be made most of amongst the young *gallants :* although sometimes they shall use Ruff for a *fashion*, but not otherwise. However, you need not regard the giddy-headed multitude. Let them do as they list ; sometimes respecting one, sometimes the other. But when you come to the counsellors and men of law, which know right from wrong, judging your worths to be equal, they shall prefer neither, but use

the kindness of both. How say you : are you both pleased ?

Band and *Ruff.* We are.

Cuff. Then go before me to the next town, and I'll follow after with a *band* of your friendship drawn, which I hope these gentleman will *seal* with their *hands.*

[*Exeunt Band and Ruff.*

Cuff. Claw me, and I'll claw thee,—the proverb goes:
Let it be true, in this that freshman shows.
Cuff graceth hand, Cuff's debtors hand remain ;
Let *hands* clap me, and I'll *cuff* them again.

Notes and Observations

ON

WORK FOR CUTLERS,

AND

A MERRY DIALOGUE BETWEEN BAND, CUFF, AND RUFF.

By _____

of _____

in the County of _____

18 _____

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